

Cancer Vaccines and Tumor Immunity

Orentas RJ, Hodge JW, Johnson BD (eds)

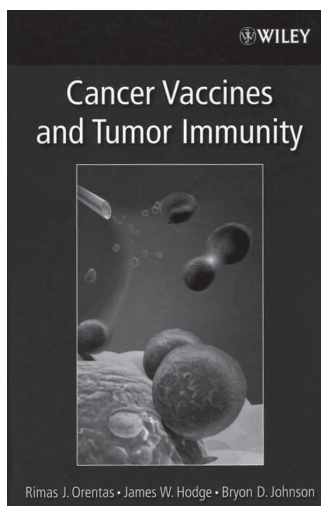
John Wiley & Sons (2008)

334 pages

ISBN-13: 9780470074749

RRP \$185.00

Admit it. Whenever you look at a paper or a book that is exactly on the topic of your own research interest, the first thing you do is to see whether they have cited you. After all, once in a while it is nice to have your papers cited by someone other than yourself. Sadly for most of us, all too often we do not find our names there. Please tell me it's not just me. Anyway, the only possible conclusion is that the author is too ignorant to recognise work of pivotal importance. Any other explanation is too bitter to contemplate.



It is therefore with regret that I inform you that the authors and editors of this book are clearly too ignorant to recognise work of pivotal importance. This is a pity, because on the face of it this book otherwise could be useful at several levels and contains eminent authors who really ought to be on top of their fields. Cancer immunology has undergone a reinvigoration in recent years with the discovery of new principles underlying active regulation of immunity and the subsequent clinical application of these findings with sometimes quite striking results. The field is evolving rapidly and such changes are often left out of books like this due to the long lag time for publication. It is gratifying to see that it contains well

written sections relating to regulatory T cells and blockade of inhibitory costimulatory molecules including CTLA-4, but also several others of relevance. It is also very good to see discussion of some of the other areas plaguing the field, such as how to interpret immune responses, or the shortcomings of conventional clinical response evaluation criteria.

Despite this, I found this book strangely frustrating to read. A quick look at the section headings and chapter titles gives the impression that the book is a comprehensive overview of the biology of both innate and adaptive immunity, and a good summary of attempts to exploit this. However, many chapters are almost autobiographical and often entirely restricted to a single model system developed by that author's group. As examples, chapter 2 on carbohydrate vaccines uses the term "our group" with dangerous frequency. The chapter on antigen-specific cancer immunotherapy concentrates exclusively on HPV, ignoring a huge range of other research activity and relevant models. Other chapters similarly concentrate on the authors' own isolated areas, including listeria or EBV. Some chapters appear to be broader but again miss some of the key published data. For example, chapter 10 on allogeneic whole cell vaccines somehow manages to miss all of Peter Hersey's important work. An exception to this litany of complaints is chapter 4 on toll-like receptors, an excellent overview of the area written by the eloquent Danny Speiser and Art Krieg.

I was excited to have the opportunity to review a book where the title precisely reflects my research interest. Sadly, and not just because they missed all my papers, this one is too patchy and too parochial to be of broad interest and I cannot recommend it.

Ian Davis, Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, Austin Health, Heidelberg, Victoria.